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# THE HARLEQUINADE

BY GRANVILLE BARKER

THE MADRAS HOUSE

ANATOL

THE MARRYING OF ANN LEETE

THE VOYSEY INHERITANCE

WASTE

SOULS ON FIFTH

THREE SHORT PLAYS: ROCOCO: VOTE

BY BALLOT: FAREWELL TO THE THEATRE

*In Collaboration with Laurence Housman*

PRUNELLA





*“And what should Columbine be like? Well, she is just like what you’d most like her to be. She has a rose in her hand.”*

FRONTISPIECE. See page 26.



THE HARLEQUINADE  
AN EXCURSION BY  
DION CLAYTON CALTHROP  
AND GRANVILLE BARKER



BOSTON  
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY  
1918

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BY HARLEY GRANVILLE BARKER

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## JUST A WORD IN YOUR EAR



NOT to put too fine a point to it, this isn't a play at all and it isn't a novel, or a treatise, or an essay, or anything like that; it is an excursion, and you who trouble to read it are the trippers.

Now in any excursion you get into all sorts of odd company, and fall into talk with persons out of your ordinary rule, and you borrow a match and get lent a magazine, and, as likely as not, you may hear the whole tragedy and comedy of a ham and beef carver's life. So you will get a view of the world as oddly coloured as Harlequin's clothes, with puffs of sentiment dear to the soul of Columbine, and Clownish fun with Pantaloonish wisdom and chuckles. When you were young, you used, I think, to enjoy a butterfly's kiss; and that, you remember, was when your mother brushed your cheek with her eye-lashes. And also when you were young you held a buttercup

under other children's chins to see if they liked butter, and they always did, and the golden glow showed and the world was glad. And you held a shell to your ear to hear the sound of the sea, and when it rained, you pressed your nose against the window-pane until it looked flat and white to passers-by. It is rather in that spirit that Alice and her Uncle present this excursion to you.

I suppose it has taken over a thousand people to write this excursion, and we are, so far, the last. And not by any means do we pretend because of that to be the best of them ; rather, because of that, perhaps, we cannot be the best. We should have done much better — if we could. Oh, this has been written by Greeks and Romans and Mediæval Italians and Frenchmen and Englishmen, and it has been played thousands and thousands of times under every sort of weather and conditions. Think of it: when the gardeners of Egypt sent their boxes of roses to Italy to make chaplets for the Romans to wear at feasts this play was being performed ; when the solemn Doges (which Alice once would call "Dogs") of Venice held festa days, this play was shown to the people.

And here Alice interrupts and says: "Do you think people really like to read all that sort of thing? Why don't you let me tell the story, please? I'm sitting here waiting to." Well, so she shall.



# THE HARLEQUINADE

*For some time now she has been sitting there. Miss Alice Whistler is an attractive young person of about fifteen (very readily still she tells her age), dressed in a silver grey frock which she wishes were longer. The frock has a white collar; she wears grey silk stockings and black shoes; and, finally, a little black silk apron, one of those French aprons. If you must know still more exactly how she is dressed, look at Whistler's portrait of Miss Alexander.*

*What happened was this. A pleasant old Victorian art fancier (sort of) saw the child one day, and noted that her name was Whistler ("No relation," said her Uncle Edward, "so far as we know"), and "That's how to dress her," said he. And thereupon he forked out what he delicately called "The*

*Wherewithal*" ("Which sounded like a sort of mackintosh," said Alice afterwards), for they couldn't have afforded it themselves. "You're still young enough to take presents," said Uncle Edward. And indeed Alice was very pleased, and saw that the hem was left wide enough to let down several times. And here she is; the dress is kept for these occasions.

Here she is in a low little chair, sitting with her basket of knitting beside her on one side of a simply painted grey and black proscenium, across which, masking the little stage, blue curtains hang in folds. "The blue," said Miss Alice when she ordered them, "must be the colour of Blue-eyed Mary." The silly shopman did not know the flower. "Blue sky then," said Alice, "it's the blue that all skies seem to be when you're really happy under them." "Reckitt's blue is what you want," the shopman said, when nothing seemed to do. Yes; and a very good blue that is — by lamplight.

On the other side of the proscenium, ensconced (and the word was made to express just this) — ensconced in a porter's chair is Uncle Edward. It is an old porter's chair, for



*they seem not to make them nowadays. This one indeed was given to Uncle Edward by a club that had no further use for it, having cured the draughts in its front hall by putting up a patent door that the fat members stuck in and that tried to cut the thin members in half. A cross between a sentry-box and a cradle stuck on end it is, and very, very suitable to sit upright in and pretend you're not asleep. Years of that sitting in by porters, and of leaning against by under-porters and messengers who keep you awake with their chatter, and of daily dusting and rubbing, have made its leather uniform softly glow and its brass buttons shine till it looks a comfortable piece of furniture indeed. Now the side of a stage is draughty at the best of times, and Uncle Edward, says he, is by no means so young as he was (a real live joke to him that outworn phrase is), and how he managed before he had it he really cannot think!*

*However early you come to the performance you always find him there. For minutes and minutes you may only be aware of very shiny square-toed boots and black-trouser legs and a newspaper that hides the rest of him.*

*On most days it will be "The Times", on Wednesday it may be "Punch", and on Saturdays "The Spectator." "That is a gentleman's reading," he says. When the paper is lowered, as he turns a page, you behold one of those oldish gentlemen with a rather pleasant bad temper who really only mean to demand by it that young people shall pay them the compliment of "getting round" them. As the time of the performance draws near he is apt, at each lowering of the paper, to count you up as you sit there waiting, and if there are not enough of you he looks very disapproving indeed.*

*Alice watches you furtively almost all the time as she knits or crochets. For audiences make such a difference to her, and she is always hoping for a good one. It need not be a big one to be good (Uncle Edward likes them big). To be a good audience is to take your share of the performance by enjoying it in a simple jolly way — if you can. That eases the actors of half the strain, and then they can enjoy it, too. And if you can't do this, you'd much better go home.*

*When it is quite near the time to begin, you hear the orchestra tuning up. This you should*

*never miss. There is nothing like it as a tonic to rouse the theatre appetite. At the sound of it Alice puts away her knitting, and hopes her hair is tidy.*

*Then on a single flute a little tune is played, and the child's eyes light up. Music excites her, sets all the gaiety in her free. If it wasn't for the help that music is she'd quite despair sometimes of getting through the play.*

*"That's mine. That's my theme," she says.*

*"I've had a piece of music to myself because every one in this has a piece of music. But mine is —"*

*But Uncle Edward has finally put his paper down. And now — by means of a violent operation on his waistcoat — he produces an enormous silver watch, like those that railway guards have. And he turns to Alice.*

*"Time," he says magnificently.*

*Alice looks doubtfully at the laggards trailing to their places and snapping down the stalls. But Uncle Edward is adamant to her if tolerant to them.*

*"Some of 'em always late," and his blue eye roves round. "It's their dinner. But go and begin your bit like a good girl."*

*So then Alice comes to the middle of the stage;  
swallows a little from nervousness, and  
begins . . .*

ALICE. If you please, this is going to be a Harlequinade . . . a real one. And we begin it at the beginning, which is as many thousand years ago as you like to believe. It's about how . . . how . . .

UNCLE EDWARD. Psyche.

ALICE. When I was young I would call her Fishy. It is all about how Psyche, who is a perfect darling . . .

UNCLE EDWARD. You are not to put bits in.

ALICE. Well, she is a perfect darling. But you don't see her in the first scene. Now Psyche, who is the Soul, comes down . . . whenever a baby's born, of course, a little scrap of Psyche is sent down! . . . But this is how the story goes . . . That she comes down from Mount Olympus where the gods live to adventure on the earth. And in the Harlequinade she's Columbine, but that only means a dove, and a dove is the symbol of the soul. And anybody who is fond of flowers knows that, because if you look at Columbine flowers you can see that they are made of doves with

their wings out. And so she ought always to be dressed in blue.

UNCLE EDWARD. What's that?

ALICE. Well, I like blue. She's a restless adventurous person, and she's always running away from the other gods. For you see the Soul has need of human love, and, of course, gods that are nothing but gods can't appreciate that. Now when she gets to earth her wings drop off. And when she tries to get back to the gods, she can't until she finds another love as great as hers. For two souls that love become more than human; and when their earthly course is run (as Doctor Watts says), it gives them wings again, and back they can fly.

UNCLE EDWARD. Pretty.

ALICE. But . . . to resume. Mercury, who used to spend week-ends in Athens and Corinth and those places, was sent to try and find her. Mercury has to get old Charon, who is the ferryman for rowing souls over the Styx . . . which is a river all the dead have to cross . . . and my aunt, who's dead and full of fun . . . oh, I'm sure she still is full of fun . . . always said it was the most interesting place in spiritual geography.

UNCLE EDWARD. Steady! Steady!

ALICE. You told me she said so.

UNCLE EDWARD. In private. Mercury gets Charon . . . ?

ALICE. To ferry him across. And on the earth side they meet . . .

UNCLE EDWARD. Not so fast.

ALICE. They meet a Greek philosopher whose name is . . .

UNCLE EDWARD. Hipponax.

ALICE. Aren't some of these names dreadfully difficult to remember. Hipponax has just died, and he is waiting to be ferried over. And it's rather awkward for him, as, when he was alive, he wrote a book to prove there weren't any gods and there wasn't any after life. And then comes Momus, who's a sort of half-god, not important enough to be rowed over, but he has swum the river as he wants to join the party. Hipponax stays to look after Charon's boat. And that's how it all begins. When the three of them get to earth Mercury's called Harlequin, and Momus, Clown; and . . . But I tell you all that later.

UNCLE EDWARD. You missed out again about how Harlequin got his mask.

ALICE. Sorry! So I did. The Greek philosopher always wore a mask, so that people shouldn't see whether he was talking sense or not. For you can tell that by looking at people. And he wore a cloak all patches to pretend he was poor, because you aren't a philosopher at all unless you're poor . . . there's no need. But Columbine's the nicest. You'll see.

UNCLE EDWARD. You're not to take sides.

ALICE. I wasn't. They will see.

UNCLE EDWARD. Ask George if they are ready.

ALICE. They are always quite ready when I begin.

UNCLE EDWARD. All right.

*[So he takes up the large wooden mallet that lies beside his chair and says solemnly to the audience,*

As in Paris.

*[Then he bangs the stage with it three times. He loves this classic touch. Then he calls out to George (we must suppose), whom we guess to be the presiding genius at the "back", "Music!"*

*The Music begins. It is a small orchestra to be sure. But if you have two double-basses and enough fiddles on top you can manage to make the flowing of a river sound quite well. The music makes you think of the Styx (which is a deep bass, never ending, four in a bar, sort of river) before ever Uncle Edward and Alice draw you the curtains and show you the picture. Rather an awesome picture it is with the cold blue river and the great black cliffs and the blacker cypresses that grow along its banks. There are signs of a trodden slope and a ferry, and there's a rough old wooden shelter where passengers can wait; a bell hung on the top with which they call the ferryman. And under this now sits Hipponax, the Greek philosopher; and he is ringing the bell very violently and unphilosophically indeed.*

*Alice goes back to her seat. She can see the scenes from there by twisting her head far round, and she often does. For whether things on the stage go right or wrong, they never go the same way twice, so it is always interesting.*



ALICE. This is the banks of the Styx. That is . . . Oh, I said that before.

HIPPONAX. Ferry! Hie! Ferry!

*[He rings and rings, but only the black cliffs echo back the hollow sound of the bell.]*

HIPPONAX. So I was right! There is no ferryman; there are no gods. But yet, though I died of brain fever yesterday afternoon, here still, in some sense, am I. Which confirms the fact that I am an extraordinary man. In the last world I proved that there were no gods because, said I . . . it was very simple . . . I have never seen them. And in this world . . . if by any means I can get across that river . . . I'll prove in a second volume that there are none here either.

*[And now comes Mercury, who is as beautiful and as calm as the statue of him that rests — as if but for a moment — on its black plinth in the Naples Museum. If that statue could move like a faun, that is what Mercury should be; so it isn't easy to find an actor to play him. And his voice must be clear and sweet. Not loud. But his words must be like the telling of the hours — as befits a god.]*

*He stands there in his glory. But Hipponax still tugs at the bell and grumbles, for he sees nothing but empty air.*

HIPPONAX. [*With a final snap and pull.*]  
Ferry!! Not a soul about.

ALICE. He can't see Mercury because he doesn't believe in him.

*[Then comes Charon from the ferry with his long pole. He is but a half-god and so can grow old, older and ever old, though he may never die. He looks at Hipponax with great contempt.]*

CHARON. Another of these philosophers!

HIPPONAX. I have rung this bell I don't know how many times.

CHARON. I heard you.

HIPPONAX. You heard me. [*Then he swells.*]  
Do you know who I am? Hipponax.

CHARON. Do you know who I am? Charon.

HIPPONAX. Charon!

*[It is as if trees and rocks had begun to speak to him. His breath goes, he fishes wildly for his book, his immortal work they called it, so naturally he did manage to bring one copy out of the world with him.]*

There's no such —! [*But Charon is so very real.*] Oh! Well, I'll mention it in a footnote.

CHARON. Stop your foolish talk, man, and stand up. Don't you see who is with me?

HIPPONAX. There's no one with you.

[*Then the voice of the god is heard. Music to us. And even to Hipponax, now, it is as if the air round him were gently shaken.*]

CHARON. Take care.

MERCURY. Charon, the two obols.

[*Charon, humbly saluting, takes his fee.*]

CHARON. If you can't see, can't you hear him?

HIPPONAX. I heard nothing.

CHARON. Give him your mask and cloak to hide the light from his eyes that dazzles you.

HIPPONAX. Give who?

CHARON. It's Mercury, the Messenger.

[*Hipponax, himself, is shaking a little now. Charon takes from him his mask and his ragged philosopher's cloak, and, sure enough, as they hang where he places them they seem to cover a human shape.*]

ALICE. And that's the beginning of Harlequin's clothes.

HIPPONAX. Nonsense. These conjuring tricks. There are no gods. I've proved there are no . . .

*[Mercury has lifted the mask and at sight of that radiance, as if lightning had struck him, Hipponax falls to the ground.]*

CHARON. Now you've blinded him.

MERCURY. No blinder a worm than he was before . . . denying the sun. What are you?

HIPPONAX. *[Without lifting his head.]* I was once . . . a sort of philosopher.

MERCURY. Really! Row him across, Charon; loose him among the shades of the poets and children, and in pity they may teach him to see.

CHARON. Come along.

*[He handles him with about that sort of kindness — and no more than enough of it — which you spend on a mangy cur. But then he stops.]*

What's that? Someone swimming my Styx. On the bank . . . shaking himself. Momus, my half-brother.

*[And on bounds Momus. He is the comic man, it's easy to see. Well, gods and godlings must be made to laugh sometimes,*

*and since life is simple to them, they laugh at the simplest things. Walking is rather serious. So Momus never walks; he waddles, and they laugh at that. It is serious to stand straight. So he is always knock-kneed and bandy-legged, and they laugh like anything. And, as they never grow old, jokes never grow old to them and they never ask for new ones. So this is always Momus's welcome cry when he comes to make them laugh . . .*

MOMUS. Yes . . . here we are again.

CHARON. And in a nice state.

MOMUS. Almost almighty Mercury, take me with you. I know why Psyche went . . . she was as bored as I am. I can help you find her. For if she's up to mischief, I shall soon know where she is.

*[Though he looks very, very funny as he pleads, Mercury shakes his head.]*

Don't go thinking because you're so clever, you can do better without a fool like me. Saturday afternoon it is. If, when Jupiter starts work on Monday, there's no one to draw the corks of the bottled lightning . . . look out for trouble. Come along, too, Charon.

CHARON. I?

MOMUS. Yes, you're growing ever so dull. A week on earth will do you good . . . if you're not too much of an old 'un.

CHARON. I'm not an old 'un.

MOMUS. You are an old 'un.

*[And when a thing isn't really funny, say it twice and it often sounds so. Charon is tempted.]*

CHARON. I can't leave the boat.

HIPPONAX. Oh, take me back to earth again. They'll mock at me on the other side of this hellish river . . . play tricks on me . . .

MERCURY. Charon, give him your oar. He shall mind the boat till Monday. A final and a wholesome exercise in what he calls his philosophy, to row all day from a place he has never understood to a place he doesn't believe in.

HIPPONAX. I can't row.

MOMUS. You don't know what you can do till you try. You'll have more muscle by Monday.

CHARON. Can you get good wine below?

MERCURY. To your boat, philosopher.

*[What is a blind man to question the voice of a god? He turns to the hated river, tapping]*

*the ground with his pole. Now comes a joke, one of the very oldest.*

MOMUS. One moment.

HIPPONAX. [*As he turns back, hopeful of respite.*] What is it?

MOMUS. How far would you have got if I hadn't called you back?

*[Mercury hardly smiles. But Charon is abandoned to mirth. He slaps his old knees with his hands.]*

CHARON. He's a funny fellow.

HIPPONAX. Dull clown!

*[And he starts again. But there's another joke he must be part of, just as old and just as silly.]*

MOMUS. No, no! Turn to the right, and to the right. Still to the right. And again to the right. That's right.

*[Round and round went Hipponax until he found his path again. Silly . . . and unkind? Yes, Nature and children with their parables of humour sometimes seem to be so . . . but only if we lose all touch with them. Then the voice of Mercury is like music . . .]*

MERCURY. Come; earthwards both of you. I smell the spring and fields and flowers. Is that Pan piping? No, a bird's song. Such little things as that does Psyche love and seek. On we go.

*[Mercury is gone. You should wonder how, though it looks mere walking. Charon is walking after, so tame an exit that it will never do.]*

*"Give us a back, old 'un," says Momus, and leap-frogs him. Poor old back, it gives way. For Momus is a weight indeed. But if you can't laugh at your own hurts, what can you laugh at? So Charon totters after, chuckling as he rubs his bones.*

*And Uncle Edward and Alice draw the blue curtains. Uncle Edward's eye questions the audience. They don't so often applaud this scene. For one thing, they're still settling down. And then, applause is not the only sign they're liking it, nor yet the best. But you can tell by the feel of them. Edward can. And if it's a friendly, happy, a sort of "home -y" feel, why then, the quieter they sit the better. But Alice only thinks of how the actors*



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*do, and she is never too pleased with this scene. It's never beautiful enough to look at. Mercury (poor dear!) is never really like a god. And so she hurries to the next.*



LICE. The next part is going to be all in dumb-show, because it's in the fifteenth century, and that's how they used to play things in the fifteenth century, when they played heaps of Harlequinades . . . and Uncle and I and the actors are nothing if not correct.

UNCLE EDWARD. True.

ALICE. But first we are going to skip an awful lot, all the part about the Early Ages, and the Middle Ages and all about how the gods gradually became actors . . .

UNCLE EDWARD. Better tell them.

ALICE. Well, it's rather difficult to understand. But you know if you stop believing in a thing, such as fairies, or that you like chocolate, or that your Uncle's fond of you . . . after a bit it somehow isn't there any longer. That's what nearly happened to the gods. But Mercury knew that if people won't believe a thing when you say it's real, they'll just as good as

believe it and understand it a great deal better when it only seems make-believe. And that's Art. And as the easiest art in the world is the art of acting . . . I hope they didn't hear [*She wags back her little head to the proscenium.*] . . . the gods became actors.

UNCLE EDWARD. Now you get back to the story. It's all they [*He wags his big head at the audience.*] care about.

ALICE. Yes. Momus helped Mercury find Psyche, and they all had a tremendous time and hoped it would never be Monday. For every time they got to the end of a century they wanted to stay and see what would happen in the next. Like when you eat nuts it's so very difficult to stop at any particular nut, isn't it? Now I . . .

UNCLE EDWARD. But they don't want to hear about you.

ALICE. Sorry.

UNCLE EDWARD. And don't gabble. This ain't the metaphysics, which they can't abear. This is facts. They respect facts.

ALICE. I hate facts. They're so dull. It was when they became actors they got their new names. Harlequin and Columbine and Clown and Pantaloon. And they travelled

from Greece into Italy, where Charon got called Pantaloon because he acted an old gentleman of Venice, and Saint Pantaleone is a patron of Venice, and there were heaps of people called Pantaleone there in the fifteenth. . . .

*[Uncle Edward is snapping his fingers and pointing to his trousers.]*

Yes, I know. Even to-day Pantaloon is still wearing the very Venetian clothes of the time when he first played the part. He's got on the first pantaloons ever worn, and his hair is tied in a lovelock. Clown and Pantaloon have got white faces. By this time funny actors, who acted in dumb-show, used to put flour on their faces, like Pierrot you know, because the theatres were so dark and they wanted to show their expressions. Then there's the scene. I do hope you'll like the scene. It's supposed to be Italy, and I think it's beautiful. Anyhow it's the kind of scene we have to have so as not to take up too much room. And it has beehives in it. Columbine keeps two, one for bees and one for butterflies.

*[It is part of Alice's regret, for which she keeps a nearly secret sigh, that we couldn't have real bees and butterflies. She thinks*

*it would be so jolly to see the bees and butterflies go among the audience and settle on the buttonholes and sprays they wear and bring back the sense of gardens to the people there.*

Uncle, do you know how Clown told me how to tell the difference?

UNCLE EDWARD. You minx!

ALICE. Put your hand into the butterfly hive, and if they sting you, you know it's the bees.

UNCLE EDWARD. Did he? Well, go on and tell them the rest.

ALICE. Yes. Columbine has run away again. The story's always got to be that. Either Columbine runs away from somebody, or somebody runs away with her. That's because the soul is always struggling to be free. This time Cousin Clown and Uncle Pantaloon helped her. She could twist them round her little finger. And she made a great mistake in running away with this very sham-serious young man.

UNCLE EDWARD. Sham-serious?

ALICE. He only thinks he's serious because he reads books all day long. And she married

him, and he's turned out to be most awfully dull. And I'm most awfully sorry for her. He treats her like a bit of furniture. Isn't it funny the way the soul will fall in love . . . and with the most unaccountable people; and you know how you say "I can't think what she sees in the man. . . ." But a god can see . . . and an artist. And Harlequin's a bit of both. So when he comes along . . . Uncle, the rest of it isn't a very nice story. Will they mind?

UNCLE EDWARD. They? They'll like it all the better.

ALICE. Well, you see the husband being so dull, she wants somebody to take her out and show her things and be attentive. And there's the Man of the World. And things are getting rather serious. For Cousin Clown and Uncle Pantaloon aren't any use. They're just stupid and friendly and nice, like all one's country cousins. But just in time comes Harlequin-Mercury. He has no wings left to his feet, because you wear off wings rather soon if you wander about the world. And his wand hasn't any snakes left. It's just painted white wood. And it's a good thing we've come to the jokes about the sausages, because, now Harlequin's

only a strolling player, he's sometimes awfully hungry.

UNCLE EDWARD. Very true. Are they ready?

ALICE. I'll see.

*[So she turns and sticks her head through the curtains.]*

Yes.

UNCLE EDWARD. Music.

*[And the music begins again.]*

Some are all for a bell, and again others are for a gong, but . . .

*[He wields his trusty mallet for three hard whacks on the floor. And then the two of them draw back the curtains on the second scene.]*



*LINE of dark cypress trees; a blue sky and an Italian landscape. A path to a house. A young man lying on the ground reading. His name is Gelsomino. The music tells him that he hears Columbine. He stirs, looks round, frowns, and goes back to his book. Columbine flies out of the house.*

ALICE. [*Radiant and proud.*] This is Columbine.

*[And what should Columbine be like? Well, she is just like what you'd most like her to be. She has a rose in her hand. She stops as she sees her husband, then shyly puts out her arms to him, but he cannot see that, for his back is turned. She creeps up to him and drops the rose on his book. He brushes the rose away and waves her away too.]*

He's not really angry, but you see he's married to her, and he can't bear being interrupted.



*[Columbine stands looking — deliberately looking her prettiest; wistful, appealing.]*

I think that's been her mistake. If she'd . . .

UNCLE EDWARD. Sh!

ALICE. Sorry!

*[Mechanically he has put the rose in the book for a marker, and is moving away. But now we see — or if we don't see, we hear in the music — the Man of the World on his way.]*

The Man of the World. I told you!

*[Such a man of the world! But when you can dress in vermillion and purple and gold and wear the biggest cloak and the largest sword that ever was and twist your moustache as outrageously as you please, what's easier than to fascinate such a child as Columbine? She curtsies to him as he bows to her. She beckons to her husband to join them. But he, lost now in the landscape, now in his reopened book, waves only a distant greeting, and will not budge. The Man of the World smiles a most worldly smile, and soon he and pretty Columbine are strolling towards the house; she looking down at the flagged*

*walk and the flowers that border it, he looking down at her, with eyes too greedy to be kind.*

What a pity, isn't it?

*[Then the music tells us quite unmistakably that Pantaloon and Clown are tumbling along.*

Listen! Pantaloon and Clown! They are always coming to lunch. Because if actors like this know there is lunch . . .

UNCLE EDWARD. Hush!

*[And on they tumble; the Pantaloon and Clown that Children know! Clown has a basket that he slyly sets down and Pantaloon falls over it, of course. Gelsomino joins them, willy-nilly; for they fetch him there, because Clown has a joke to tell.*

ALICE. This is the beehive and butterfly-hive story. The music does bees and butterflies beautifully, doesn't it? And I told you the joke besides, so it's quite easy to follow. Gelsomino never sees it. He is dull.

*[Clown does sigh deeply over Gelsomino's unmoved face. But he tries again. He takes from his basket the entirely impossible*

---

*corpse of a cat. Pantaloon chuckles silently. But Alice laughs out loud.*

Oh! I'd forgotten that one. It's one of his very old ones . . . but I like it. He says . . . "Somebody's thrown away this perfectly good cat." Gelsomino doesn't think it a bit funny.

*[Gelsomino doesn't. He sniffs and retires disgusted. Clown juggles with the cat to cheer himself up. Then he flings it recklessly high in air and you hear it fall (the big drum does this) with a loud plomp in the road.*

*Back stroll Columbine and the Man of the World. But she is looking up at him now, and the music tells us that her heart is beating fast. She welcomes Clown and Pantaloon with a kiss, one for each. Clown is so funny when he is kissed. And she makes them known to the Man of the World. Clown is so funny when he bows. He can't bow all he wants to without knocking Pantaloon over. Then Columbine has to help pick him up and comfort him and kiss him again. Then there is the meal to be prepared. Off they run,*

*all three, and on they bring it, drinkables, eatables, table and chairs.*

*Only Gelsomino sits aside. The Man of the World goes to him to ask what book so absorbs him, friendly, faux bonhomme. Gelsomino responds at once. Books are important. And, as he lifts his up, the rose drops out. The Man of the World picks it up and — “May he keep such a trifle?” “By all means,” nods Gelsomino, wondering. And Columbine, there with the dish in her hands, sees it, and — there’s very nearly no macaroni for lunch.*

*But some one else sees it, too — sees it and sees all. This is Harlequin, who has sprung somehow from behind the trees.*

There’s Harlequin . . . with his wand and his mask. He’s watching. Now you watch.

UNCLE EDWARD. What are you laughing at? The many times you’ve seen this!

ALICE. I never can help it. This is where Clown tries to steal the breakfast, and he never remembers that Harlequin’s close behind.

*[And, indeed, while the others most ostentatiously don’t see, Clown and Pantaloon do*

*steal bread and sausages and beer — and into the basket they all go. Not the beer; that goes down the neck of Clown. Then Columbine calls them to breakfast. Harlequin is presented to the company. Gelsomino has greeted him even more coldly.*

He is weary of her relations.

*[But, behold, they discover there is no breakfast. Clown discovers it, and is more amazed and innocent than any. Columbine is in despair. But Harlequin rises and waves his wand and strikes on the table, and breakfast appears. Clown, in a panic, turns to his basket. But, behold, that is empty now.*

*Then they have breakfast. And Clown gets a lot and Pantaloon very little. Gelsomino hasn't come to the table at all, so Columbine goes to fetch him. But he isn't hungry, he won't come. And, turning, disappointed, she sees the Man of the World lifting, not his glass to toast her, but the rose. Harlequin sees, too. And he rises to wave his wand again. Gelsomino starts to move away.*

He's getting so cross. And he says . . .  
"Do, for Heaven's sake, let me read in peace."  
You know!

*[But, with a flash of his wand, Harlequin strikes the book.]*

There! He has magicked the book all empty.

*[And, sure enough, we see Gelsomino turn the empty pages in despair. It is the simplest of tricks. Then Harlequin points to where the Man of the World woos Columbine with those eyes of his, those greedy eyes. But Gelsomino will not see.]*

He's out of temper now, so he pretends he doesn't care.

*[Harlequin points to the rose that Gelsomino so lightly let fall. The Man of the World is pressing it to his lips.]*

He points to the rose because that's a — that's a . . .! Oh, what's the word, Uncle?  
UNCLE EDWARD. Symbol.

ALICE. Thank you . . . Symbol of Columbine's true wifely love for him. And what the pointing says is: Are you going to throw that away, too? Don't be a silly fool!

*[The Man of the World is taking his leave.  
The rose is at her lips now.]*

And what he says is T o - n i g h t . . . just like that. Only *I* can't say it. Which means he'll come back t o - n i g h t and carry her off and love her ever so. And he might, what's more, if it wasn't for . . . ! But you'll see.

*[Suddenly Gelsomino goes to Columbine and demands the rose, imperiously, with a gesture not to be denied.]*

That means he says he's her husband, and can't he have it if he likes? And she won't give it him now. And she's quite right. I wouldn't either. Nor would any woman. Look !

*[And Columbine has torn the rose in pieces and flung them on the ground, and flung herself off. And then Gelsomino flings himself down in self-reproachful despair. But all this flinging shows a lover's quarrel, and there's life and hope in that. But Alice is young and stern.]*

Serve him right ! And if it wasn't for Harlequin. . . .

UNCLE EDWARD. Hush !

*[Harlequin has called to Clown and Pantaloon. And, like conspirators, they*

*stand there and most elaborately they weave a plot. It's a most difficult plot to follow. It involves a dark night and tiptoes and a signal given. It involves, too, a cloak and a skirt and a bonnet for Clown; and this attracts him so much he can attend to little else.*

ALICE. Do you guess what's going to happen? Uncle, they've forgotten the lights. Oh, this is the bit I love.

UNCLE EDWARD. [*In a hoarse whisper.*] St! George!

*[Suddenly on the little stage day becomes night. What had George to do with it?*

*[In a hoarse whisper still.]* Bring 'em round a bit . . . the number two steels.

*[And the moon, obediently turning, floods the little stage. Indeed it is pretty. Uncle Edward can't contain himself. And he has given it away anyhow.*

Romantic, isn't it? And just the colour moonlight ought to be.

*[The music tells us this is real romance. Dark figures are flitting among the trees. Who are they? Gelsomino, Harlequin, Pantaloon. The Man of the World,*



*wrapped dramatically in a great black cloak, arrives. "Arrives" is poor. He approaches. Pantaloon totters down to him. "Wait, and your love will come." He waits and his love comes, waddling most amazingly and wrapped in the tablecloth. We are sure it's Clown, and who wouldn't be? But the Man of the World — for a real Man of the World — is strangely deceived. He kneels to her adoringly; he rises and would embrace her passionately.*

ALICE. "Love of my life," he says. "Let us away!"

*[Harlequin waves his wand. The tablecloth has gone. It is Clown indeed, clownish and undoubted.*

Yes, it's Clown, it's Clown, it's Clown!  
And Clown says: — "Whither away, fair sir?"  
And the Man of the World just withers.

*[He grinds his teeth, does the Man of the World (if there is anything in the orchestra that will do it). And he goes, defeated. "Exit, baffled, the Man of the World." Alice is breathless.*

*Harlequin and Gelsomino are alone now, and Harlequin wraps Gelsomino, all trembling*

*as he is, in the cloak which the Man of the World dropped there. They wait. Then comes poor Columbine creeping in, timid and ashamed. She half-dreads from the stern cloaked figure. She turns to her home to kiss her hand to it. But Harlequin with his wand lures her forward. And she goes, she goes. Then the wand is waved again, and the cloak is off. It is her husband; and she shrinks, this time in terror. He stands like a stone. She waits for a blow — for a curse. But suddenly he kneels among the petals of the forgotten rose. Is it he begging forgiveness of her? She has no thought for that; only that she always loved him. She bends to him, he takes her hands. He rises and she lifts her face. Their lips join.*

*Alice and Uncle Edward draw the curtains.*

There! That's how they get back among the gods.



*E don't travel to the next Scene too quickly. Alice has gone back to her little chair, and there she sits silent, her chin cupped in her hand, her eyes dreamy. Uncle Edward clears his throat noisily several times. Then he puts on his spectacles and looks at her.*

UNCLE EDWARD. Wool-gathering?

ALICE. I love a love story. And she's such a darling, and always, all through the ages, all through what Clown calls the longest week-end on record, she falls in love and falls in love . . . and falls in love.

UNCLE EDWARD. Come, now, it's only story-telling. Don't let it get on your mind. Here, I want to speak to you.

*[Alice most obediently goes over to him, and he whispers to her.]*

ALICE. *[By no means in a whisper.]* But perhaps George is busy with the next scene.

UNCLE EDWARD. Never you mind.

*[Away she goes and through the curtains, leaving Uncle Edward to fill his pipe. But she's back almost at once and full of smiles.]*

UNCLE EDWARD. *[Anxiously.]* Well, what did he say?

ALICE. He said : — “I was thinking of having one myself, Miss Whistler.”

*[And there follows her through the curtains a hand and arm holding a foaming pint of beer, which she takes across to her Uncle. The beer goes the way of all beer.]*

UNCLE EDWARD. *[After wiping his mouth, most politely, with the cheerfulest looking handkerchief you ever saw.]* On the warm side. Go on with your bit.

*[Alice takes her talking place again, feet together, hands behind her. Then a long breath.]*

ALICE. So the years went by. And they acted in Italy, and they acted in France, and they acted in England. Which is where we've got to now, in about seventeen hundred and something. All sorts of odd people got added to the company, and dropped out again on the

journeys. In France they found Pierrot. But, being a Frenchman, he hated travelling; so they left him there. Nobody knows who Pierrot was . . . at least I don't.

UNCLE EDWARD. My dear, if we start on what we don't know, we'll be here all night . . . and the next.

ALICE. I'll skip lots then . . . all about Mr. Rich and the great Harlequins. People liked them better than Garrick! And now we come to the next story. It's England, and it's London. It's about Columbine running away. It must always be about that. The hero runs away with her. Or, strictly speaking, p'raps this time it's her that runs away with him.

UNCLE EDWARD. Grammar.

ALICE. Her . . . or she that runs away with he . . . or him! She's a country girl come to be a chambermaid in London. A singing chambermaid, she is; they had them in the old plays, and it must have brightened the hotels lots. And she's called Richardson for short. Harlequin's a valet in the same house. And why they're servants now instead of actors is because it was about this time people began to think that Art and Religion and Love were things you could just ring the bell for, and up

they would come and wait on you. So this is another sort of a . . . symbol. And the gods have lost their magic.

UNCLE EDWARD. [*Much alarmed.*] What?

ALICE. All right, Uncle; it's to make a surprise. [*And then to reassure the audience, who, bless them, aren't alarmed at all.*] They really haven't, and they never can. They may lose their magicky magic; for the world grows up like we do. But Harlequin can still see deep into the hearts of men, and Columbine's so sweet that you can't help loving her though you don't know why. And that's the realest magic of all. There!

Pantaloon's the hero's lawyer . . . because when you're an old 'un you're always a bit of a lawyer . . . you can't help it. And Clown is Charles, his friend, a country squire, come up to swagger in London because they did. The story's the same story really . . . it always is . . . just twisted about. The Italian young man was buried in books, which was bad enough. But this young man is so drowned deep in himself . . . which is worse . . . that he's almost nothing but clothes. In fact he has so dropped right through himself, that he isn't himself at all. There's nothing left of him but the

reflection in his mirror. In his mirror! Do remember that . . . it's important. . . . And Harlequin has to make a man of him . . . because Harlequin is the spirit of man wanting to come to life. It's the young man's wedding morning, and Harlequin-valet — is putting out his wedding suit. There's a Woman of the World this time instead of a Man of the World, who is going to marry him only for his money. But Columbine, the chambermaid that he has never even noticed . . .

*[Behind the closed curtains a girl's voice is heard singing a simple country song.]*

There! they've begun . . . because I've been so long. That's her song. She sings as she goes through the rooms a-dusting them. And when she sings, little wild flowers grow up through the chinks of the boards.

UNCLE EDWARD. I suppose they are ready.

*[She pokes her head between the curtains.]*

*Uncle Edward has really melted to this last touch. He is wreathed in smiles.*

She's a wonderful child. Knows the whole thing backwards. Thinks of new bits for herself! I call to mind her mother saying . . .

*[Alice has turned back.]*

ALICE. Ready when we've counted twenty.

UNCLE EDWARD. Right.

*[Alice counts: you can see her lips move.*

*Uncle Edward hums his counting as an accompaniment to the little song.*





AND so we have got to the Eighteenth Century. And we're to have a comedy of manners, and a nice study of clothes. All rather shapely; for it contains a real Beau, and the only valet who was ever a hero, and the only hero who ever had Mercury to valet him.

There is a good deal of dressing up in this scene, and a neat ploy of dressing down, and a man's soul comes into being all over an affair of a looking-glass. Which makes a pretty piece of work.

Alice knows Hogarth through the — shall we say? — nicer prints, and Austin Dobson through the daintiest of Ballads. This scene is a sort of mixture to her of early reading, and visits with her Uncle to the National Gallery, and old bits of China, and dumpy little leather-bound volumes of "The Spectator", the real "Spectator", which she can just remember on the fourth shelf from the top near the window.

*You may add, for your own personal satisfaction, when you are sitting and looking on, all that tense excitement the very words "Eighteenth Century" awaken in the properly balanced mind. Wigs and coaches and polite highwaymen, and lonely gibbets on still more lonely moors, and the Bath road with its chains and posts, all come into the background. Pedlars and cries of Pottles of Cherries, Puppet Showmen, and Clowns on stilts and French watergilders, and the sound of swords early in the morning in Leicester Fields: the touch of them all should be there. And also St. James's Street crammed with sedan chairs, and black pages with parrots, and the rattle of dice at White's or Almack's, and the hurrying feet of the Duke of Queensberry's running footmen. Such romantic dreams should come to you. Sliding panels and gentlemen driving heiresses to Gretna Green, and secret meeting places, and Fleet marriages and the scent of lavender, musk, and bergamot!*

*But the song is nearly over and the curtains are drawn back.*

*The room might be a background to a picture by Zoffany, dim and mellow and empty. There is a door leading to the passage; another that must lead to the Beau's bedroom. There is a fireplace with a fire burning. A portrait of the Woman of the World is over the fireplace. There is a dressing-table by the fireplace, with a tall wig stand and a big arm-chair by it. There is a bureau with writing materials. There are cupboards in the wall full of clothes and stockings and shoes. The bedroom door is open.*

*Harlequin-Valet stands listening until the sound of the song dies away. He has a clothes' brush in his hand. Then he places the clothes he has been brushing on the Beau's chair in a ridiculous semblance of a man. He adds a wig to the wig stand which is behind it, puts a patch on the wig block; a cane to one sleeve, a snuff-box to the other; puts shoes to their place, so that the stockings dangle into them, and then stands back to admire his work. He bows low.*

*Columbine dances on with a feather brush in her hand. He takes her to the clothes,*

*and presents her to them with every formality. She curtseys.*

ALICE. You see, she's a new maid, and he's pretending that that's her master. Lord Eglantine . . . Betty Richardson! It's rather wicked of them.

*[Harlequin waves his clothes' brush, and the wig stand bows back. He waves it again, and all the clothes tumble together in a heap.]*

*One hears the front door bang. Harlequin waves Columbine into the bedroom, sweeps the clothes together into a neat pile and stands waiting by the door. There enters Lord Eglantine, the Beau. A trifle pale, disordered, calm. He has been gambling all night. To the rhythm of a minuet Harlequin takes his cloak, hat, and cane, takes off his coat and gets him into a gorgeous dressing-gown, and so into his chair. And there he sits looking for all the world like the bundle of clothes come to life.*

*In the next room Columbine begins to sing again, and Lord Eglantine leans forward to listen.*

EGLANTINE. Maunds of cowslips, honey bags of bees! Whose voice is that?

HARLEQUIN. Ten thousand pardons, my lord, it is the chambermaid.

EGLANTINE. She has a name?

HARLEQUIN. Richardson, my lord.

EGLANTINE. Richardson. Are there people called Richardson? Interesting!

HARLEQUIN. I will stop her, my lord. We did not expect your lordship to return so soon.

EGLANTINE. No. A woman singing . . . in my bedroom. Dusting yesterday's cares away to make room for the cares of to-morrow. Put that down. I may want to say it again. What is she singing? You know everything.

HARLEQUIN. A country song, my lord.

EGLANTINE. Is the country like that? Handkerchief.

*[The word has hardly left his lips before the handkerchief, neatly unfolded, is in his hand. What a valet!]*

She has stopped. Put the door ajar so that I see her.

*[Harlequin looks at the door. It opens and stands obediently ajar.]*

A picture of innocence. Putting her hair tidy before my mirror. She is like a . . . . . [He has almost forgotten those little things that grow so prettily.] . . . when I was a boy they grew in the garden.

HARLEQUIN. Flower, my lord?

EGLANTINE. I must give her a guinea. Give me a guinea. Send her to me.

HARLEQUIN. Certainly, my lord.

[He beckons to Columbine, and she dances on.]

EGLANTINE. So you are a chambermaid?

[Richardson curtsseys. That's a poor way to describe it. It is a bob rustic indeed, but it veils Columbine very slightly. She is like one of the flowers of Keats, "all tiptoe for a flight." Into the room with the arch-valet and the very tired, elegant modish man she has come like the scent of mignonette through the window. His lordship's mind stirs even under its counterpane of cards and dice and buttered claret and snuff and fripperies, and one might think he heard the echo of a thrush's song sung when he was a boy (Unbelievable thought), and climbed trees.]

And where do you come from?

HARLEQUIN. The country, my lord.

EGLANTINE. I lived in the country once.  
There used to be things one picked in the hedges

. . .

*[He has forgotten those, too.]*

HARLEQUIN. Blackberries?

EGLANTINE. I don't think they were called  
blackberries. Things with a rough husky scent.

*[Columbine's lips make a pretty pout. In another moment we should hear Prim — . . .]*

The girl has it. Primroses. One forgets.  
One lives to learn to forget. *[He likes the sound of that. It fits the sense. It is almost an epigram.]* A guinea, child, for the song. Sing  
at your work. I like to hear you.

*[She floats away. Eglantine has turned to his mirror.]*

Fifteen thousand pounds lost and not another  
wrinkle. Sir Jeffrey Rake had it of me last  
night. They keep those rooms so hot. Quin,  
am I pale?

HARLEQUIN. Perhaps a little, my lord.

*[From nowhere in particular Quin (Harle-  
Quin, you notice) produces the Beau's]*

*morning chocolate, which Eglantine sips daintily.*

EGLANTINE. What do I do to-day?

HARLEQUIN. At eight o'clock comes Mr. Talon.

EGLANTINE. A plaguy fellow, my attorney! And I have not slept a wink. What does he want with us?

HARLEQUIN. Among other things your lordship's signature to the marriage settlement.

EGLANTINE. Whose marriage settlement?

HARLEQUIN. At ten o'clock your lordship is to be married.

EGLANTINE. So I am! Heel-taps and Hymen's torches! so I am! Wonderful fellow, you remember everything! But death of my waistcoats! Have I but two hours to dress in? Not more. Begin on me . . . begin.

HARLEQUIN. Pardon, my lord, the bell.

EGLANTINE. That's the man of law. Show him in. You can bring water in here . . . my turban . . . pantoufles.

*[The door opens and in totters Pantaloon.*

*You know him for Pantaloon, as you knew him as Pantaloon for Charon, for all he's* ✱



*Mr. Talon with his tie wig, his spectacles, and his lawyer's blue bag.*

HARLEQUIN. His lordship will receive you, Mr. Talon.

PANTALOOON. To celebrate your master's wedding day . . . two crowns.

HARLEQUIN. I am obleeged, sir.

*[Quin takes the proffered money and salutes in thanks. But — it's odd — the salute is as when Charon saluted Mercury.]*

ALICE. D'you see . . . in a dim sort of way they remember themselves and Olympus.

EGLANTINE. Mr. Talon, 'pon me honour, as punctual as a creditor. Port? Madeira or Port, Mr. Talon? Quin, Mr. Talon will drink Madeira.

*[Quin pours out the Madeira. Quin takes his master's wig, beturbans him, brings rose-water for his hands, cosmetics for his face. Quin is everywhere. Quin does everything. It is magical.]*

Mr. Talon, you look black at me.

*[Mr. Talon, seated, warmed with his wine, takes many red-taped papers from his bag and a quill from a case.]*

PANTALOOON. A goose quill.

EGLANTINE. One of your own plucking?

PANTALOOON. Often too appropriate for the signing of such documents.

EGLANTINE. This the settlement? Small house . . . strip of woodland . . . rentals of farm . . . two hundred a year! Is that all?

PANTALOOON. It is all there is left to settle, my lord; all that is left to you of your estate.

EGLANTINE. The Lady Clarissa may well complain.

PANTALOOON. But if you had not pledged yourself to pay her debts besides you would be still twelve thousand five hundred pounds the richer.

EGLANTINE. True!

PANTALOOON. And I must warn your lordship that all this done, if it's to be done, you will have left to you a mere fifteen thousand pounds in stocks. That, and no more in the world.

EGLANTINE. Fifteen?

PANTALOOON. Exactly.

EGLANTINE. How lucky. The very sum I lost last night to Sir Jeffrey Rake. Had it been more how could I have paid him? Had it been less we should have been troubled with the change.

PANTALOO. My lord, my lord !

EGLANTINE. You seem distressed. Quin, a glass of wine for Mr. Talon to restore him.

*[In a flash Quin has re-filled his glass with wine.]*

PANTALOO. You are ruined !

EGLANTINE. So it seems. Rose-water for my hands, Quin.

PANTALOO. This is Sir Jeffrey Rake's revenge. It's said that he has wooed Lady Clarissa while you won her from him.

EGLANTINE. At fifteen thousand ! Cheap, then, you'll admit at the price.

PANTALOO. A cheap lady, no doubt, my lord, at any price.

EGLANTINE. You know her ?

PANTALOO. Her reputation only.

EGLANTINE. There's her portrait behind me. I can't turn my head. Quin, bring me my mirror.

*[Mr. Talon studies the brilliant lady rather doubtfully.]*

PANTALOO. I trust she loves your lordship ?

EGLANTINE. Gad's life ! I never asked her. A monstrous unfair thing to ask of any woman of the world.

PANTALON. Doubtless she is grateful for the sacrifice you make.

EGLANTINE. I hope not.

*[Quin now has the mirror placed so that  
Eglantine can view his bride-to-be. It  
reflects other matters of importance, too.]*

Ah . . . is that the new wig on the block? Vastly good! Quin here, Mr. Talon, has a magical touch at dressing a head. Gad, but the wig block looks as lively as I do. The mirror reflects her ladyship's portrait very well.

PANTALON. You love her, my lord?

*[At this moment and at that word Harlequin waves his wand — it is a comb as it happens — and next we hear Columbine begin again to sing.]*

EGLANTINE. Love, Mr. Talon, is a most unmodish thing. It may be called . . . ! That girl is singing again!

HARLEQUIN. She knows no better, my lord. Shall I stop her?

EGLANTINE. No. But hand me my epigrams upon love. They slip my memory. It's a pretty song. *[The tablets are before him. He glances over them.]* Now, let's see. Love

is a . . . [*But he is caught by the song.*] Artless as a bird! Love . . . [*That fine epigram seems out of place beside the song.*] When a woman loves you, she . . . [*But while that girl is singing, he simply cannot read the foolish words.*] That might be the oldest song in the world!

HARLEQUIN. It is, my lord.

EGLANTINE. [*Gives back the tablets with the wryest smile.*] Take them, put them in the fire. As epigrams well enough, Mr. Talon; but perhaps the simple truth is, that I do not love her ladyship.

[*And the song ceases.*]

HARLEQUIN. Pardon me, my lord; once more the bell!

[*Quin disappears to answer it.*]

EGLANTINE. Gad, no more delays, or my bride will be kept waiting at the Church.

PANTALOOON. Listen to me, my lord. Pay these debts of hers in full, make this settlement as you intend, and you are a pauper.

EGLANTINE. But yet a gentleman who has given his word and not broken it.

PANTALOOON. You will at least allow me to postpone the payment of the debts till you are

safely married. Caution's our lawyer's trade mark. Her ladyship might die, might change her mind at the very altar!

EGLANTINE. I will not allow you to cast a doubt either on her perfect health or her perfect honour . . . nor let the shadow of one rest on mine.

PANTALON. But, my lord, why has she begged you keep your marrying secret till to-day?

EGLANTINE. Perhaps she is not very proud of me, my dear Talon. It is possible.

*[Harlequin flashes through the doorway and announces . . .]*

HARLEQUIN. Sir George Rustic.

*[It is Momus. Devil a doubt it is also our old friend, Clown.]*

EGLANTINE. Welcome, my dear George, so soon again. We didn't part till six.

CLOWN. Damned if we did. A rake-helly place is London to be sure, but after Somerset . . . I tell 'ee, I likes it. I been home since, washed hands and face! No; washed hands . . . not face. Then to White's for my chocolate, and picked up the latest smack of gossip . . . the best there's been in weeks . . . good

enough to come along and tell 'ee. So here we be again.

EGLANTINE. My attorney, Mr. Joseph Talon.

CLOWN. Han't we met somewhere before?

PANTALOOON. It is possible, sir, but it must be a while ago.

CLOWN. I seem to know 'ee. I've got an uncle called Joey.

ALICE. You see they always nearly remember.

CLOWN. No pleasant business a-doing by the looks of you. I guess it, and don't wonder. What was your joke as we started the cards? Man who sits to gamble at night had better have called his attorney betimes in the morning.

EGLANTINE. Ah, well remembered. Pray redeem, Mr. Talon, as soon as may be, my note of hand for fifteen thousand from Sir Jeffrey Rake's steward.

PANTALOOON. My lord.

CLOWN. And it's him that this bit of gossip's about that I've come to tell 'ee. Dang it, the best that ever you heard. You must know . . .

EGLANTINE. George, we detain Mr. Talon, who has business to do and no care for gossip.

PANTALOOON. Oh, believe me, my lord, for an old 'un . . .

CLOWN. So we do believe you, Mr. Joseph . . . sprier than many an old 'un, I'm sure.

EGLANTINE. A parting glass of wine to cheer you. George, help Mr. Talon and yourself.

*[Harlequin waves his wand — a napkin it is this time — and the glasses are filled.]*

CLOWN. Your health, Mr. Talon.

PANTALOOON. Yours, Sir George. Long life to you, my lord.

EGLANTINE. Life!

*[Pat on that word — that most commanding word — Columbine's song breaks forth again. And this time loud and clear.]*

Ah, stop that singing, it hurts me. Dismiss the girl! Pack her out of the house! I can't bear it.

HARLEQUIN. Very good, my lord.

*[He waves his wand and the song stops.]*

CLOWN. Another glass, Mr. Joseph.

PANTALOOON. I thank you, Sir George.

CLOWN. While I tell you my story. For it's the best story . . .!

PANTALOOON. One moment. In this glass may we drink to the bride?



CLOWN. Yes, and it's about a bride.

PANTALOOON. With his lordship's permission.

. . . "The bride!"

CLOWN. The bride? Whose bride? I mean, whose bride is this?

PANTALOOON. His lordship's.

CLOWN. Yours, Eglantine? Well, by the clocks on my stockings!

PANTALOOON. It has been kept a secret.

EGLANTINE. You leave this deed of settlement with me?

PANTALOOON. To hand to her ladyship when the ceremony ends.

EGLANTINE. What's this little farm like with its two hundred a year? Where is it?

*[Mr. Talon doesn't know, it seems. Then, it is Harlequin who speaks.]*

HARLEQUIN. If your lordship pleases, it happens very strangely to be the place where Richardson, our singing chambermaid, was born; where she lived till I brought her here.

EGLANTINE. Her home?

HARLEQUIN. Her home, my lord.

EGLANTINE. I must keep this safe, Quin.

*[Quite tenderly — though why? — he lays the parchment by his side.]*

CLOWN. Damme, I want another glass to pull me over the shock, old Talon.

PANTALOOON. An excellent wine. It reminds me of the time . . .

EGLANTINE. [*Watch in hand.*] Let it remind us all of the time. Mr. Talon, Lady Clarissa's lawyers expect you at nine with the bonds for twelve thousand five hundred pounds. Don't let me detain you.

CLOWN. Lady Clarissa! But that's the very name . . .

EGLANTINE. Stay, George, and bring me to the church and tell me your story on the way. You'll pardon me, my wedding suit awaits me.

*[He goes out. Be-wigged, rouged, be-powdered, his dressing-gown gathered about him; like a splendid vision he fades into his bedroom.]*

PANTALOOON. I must go.

CLOWN. No, not without a final glass. We've settled the Madeira, but there's still the Port.

*[Harlequin waves a powder puff. And the empty decanter is full and the full one empty.]*

PANTALOOON. No, no, Sir George, we've settled the Port, but there's still the Madeira.

*[Harlequin waves. And the empty is empty again. But the full one is empty, too.]*

CLOWN. Oh, Joey, Joey, we've settled them both.

*[There they stand, all three, grouped as we know them so well.]*

ALICE. Look, oh, look! There's the Harlequinade!

PANTALOOON. I must go.

*[And he goes.]*

EGLANTINE. *[From within.]* Quin!

HARLEQUIN. My lord.

*[And he vanishes.]*

EGLANTINE. And now for your story, George, if while I dress, it will carry through a door.

*[The scene you cannot see is, of course, of tremendous importance. A Beau dressing for his wedding! It couldn't be done upon the stage because no audience roughly coming in from their dinner ridiculously dressed in black clawhammer coats could appreciate the niceties of the toilette of a Beau, so far, so very far removed from the*

*uncultured vulgarities of the Nut. They say that even the very silk-worms who span to make him silk for his coats are set aside from the silk-worms who spin silk for persons of grosser habit. And every flower embroidered on his coat is perfumed with its proper scent. And a girl has gone blind through making the filmy froth of lace about his throat.*

CLOWN. It's carrying round London by this time. You know Sir Jeffrey Rake?

EGLANTINE. I think so.

CLOWN. Yes, don't you. You lost enough to him last night.

EGLANTINE. I did.

CLOWN. He's been this year past, it seems, sweethearting . . . and a bit more . . . with a famous lady of fashion here in town. But he'd not a penny, and she'd ten thousand pounds of debts. So marry they couldn't till she hit on a plan.

EGLANTINE. Indeed?

CLOWN. A fine lady's plan. She was to cozen some wealthy fop and swear to marry him if he'd pay those debts of hers. D'you mark that?

EGLANTINE. I mark it.

CLOWN. There's more to come. The night before the wedding was to be . . . last night as ever was . . . if Sir Jeffrey didn't win at cards a cool fifteen thousand from the same poor fool. And this very morning, off have the precious couple gone! Married by this, begad they are; he with his pockets lined, she free of her Jews. It'll be all over town in an hour. And the fool fop is dressing for his wedding! Now did ever you hear the like of that?

*[There is silence in the other room.]*

I say, did ever you hear the like of that? Is your master there, Quin?

HARLEQUIN. *[Who is passing in and out.]*  
To some extent he is, Sir George.

CLOWN. Gad, let me think a minute . . . though the wine's in my head. What sum did you lose to Sir Jeffrey last night? Your bride's name was Clarissa. . . . I heard it. And Clarissa Mordaunt's the name of that fine lady. Odds, Bobs and Buttons! You're not the fool fop, Eglantine, are you?

*[Is it Eglantine who enters? There stands something for a moment like a dead thing dressed in a bridegroom's splendour. It*

*is as if some ice-cold hand had plucked at his heart. Yet he is calm; the poise remains true, the subtle artifice is there. But the crushing blow to his pride is in his pale face, and his voice rings bitterly when he says :*

EGLANTINE. I was.

CLOWN. I'm sorry. I might have guessed. I mean, of course I couldn't have guessed . . . that any man would be such a fool . . . I mean . . oh, gad, I . . .

ALICE. He never opens his mouth but he puts his foot in it. That's what he's trying to say.

CLOWN. But there's time yet. Old Talon can't have paid the money to her lawyers by this. Jeffrey Rake boasted too soon. I'll run to stop it.

EGLANTINE. Pray, do nothing of the sort, George.

CLOWN. But I will. An't I your friend? What's the address?

EGLANTINE. My pistol, Quin.

*[The pistol is in his hand.]*

CLOWN. And the fifteen thousand Rake won. Hold it back. We'll call him out and do for him . . . one of us.

EGLANTINE. Must I go so far as to shoot you in the leg, my dear George, to convince you that it will be an errand ill run . . . that they are welcome to their gains . . . that I count myself well rid of them.

CLOWN. Oh! You don't count on my not telling the story, do you?

EGLANTINE. Though I shot you as dead as mutton, every joint would squeak it, I feel sure.

CLOWN. Oh!

EGLANTINE. Quin; the door.

CLOWN. Oh!

*[Still he stands, grinning there.]*

EGLANTINE. George, we are keeping my servant in a draught.

*[Clown waddles out. Harlequin vanishes too. He is back in a moment to find Eglantine sunk in the chair facing the mirror to see — finery! And what else?]*

Quin. In the glass there . . . is that Eglantine?

HARLEQUIN. Till this moment your lordship has been pleased to think so.

EGLANTINE. The country girl that sang. I had her sent away.

HARLEQUIN. Since the song caused your lordship some discomfort.

EGLANTINE. Stop her before she goes. [*He takes the parchment from the table.*] Stay, give me pen and ink. This is for her when the name is altered. Her home I think you said. . . .

*[Harlequin vanishes again. Eglantine most carefully erases the one name and writes in the other. Then he rises, pistol in hand, and faces himself in mirror, looks himself full in the face.]*

And now, Lord Eglantine, since you are he! Peg for clothes, scribbler of epigrams, now to end and for ever your tailor's dream.

*[And he fires. But he doesn't fall. Instead, the mirror cracks and a puff of smoke comes from it. Alice must not interrupt the story or she would; and she aches to, because she always fears the audience may not grasp the point. Lord Eglantine was a reflection of his time in the polished mirror of his age. Until he blew the reflection into smithereens, he had no soul, no reality. A wig, a box of patches, snuff, silk, lace, a clouded cane, a neat sense for*



---

*words, that was Eglantine, and now he has become, in all humility, a man. Back comes Harlequin to find him.*

HARLEQUIN. My lord !

EGLANTINE. A slight accident.

HARLEQUIN. The noise has wakened our neighbours.

EGLANTINE. On my honour it has wakened me.

HARLEQUIN. Richardson !

*[Columbine appears.]*

Kindly pick up his lordship's pieces.

*[She has her little dust-pan and brush, and most neatly she does so. Eglantine — a new Eglantine — watches her, and the thought of a new life is born in him.]*

EGLANTINE. We've a few guineas in the house, I suppose ?

HARLEQUIN. A few, my lord.

EGLANTINE. Enough for a coach hire to the country. A penniless fellow such as I am, Quin, would she welcome me to her home, I wonder ?

HARLEQUIN. But I fear that this parchment fails of its effect unless your lordship is married to the owner.

EGLANTINE. But not a bad idea, Quin.  
[*Then he sighs doubtfully.*] Would she think so?

HARLEQUIN. Let us ask her when she has picked up the pieces.

[*And here Alice and Uncle Edward draw the curtains, for the scene is over. But Alice still stands fingering their folds. Her eyes smile, but her mouth droops a little doubtfully. She is never over-happy about this scene. "Very pretty" she hears the front row people say; and then they rustle their programmes and read about whiskey very old in bottle, or cigarettes, a very special blend. "Very pretty" is so patronising. Someone else remarks "How quaint"; and that is worse still. Miles away from us is the meaning of that eighteenth century with its polished perfections. So perfect, yet so partially perfect, that mankind could only break them all to pieces and start again. But Alice, tidy little soul, loves the fine order of it all. If they embroidered flowers so well, they must, she thinks, have loved the very flowers, too, and such good*

*manners must have meant that somewhere underneath the silk and stays they had kind and worthy souls. But her mouth does droop a little, and she asks her uncle, almost whispering:*

*"Do you think they understood it?"*

*"Any child could understand it," Uncle Edward says, and back to his paper he goes.*

*Alice gives a shy glance round. She doesn't mind now if they do hear.*

*"But that's the trouble, as poor Auntie used to say: 'They're not children.' Don't we only wish they were."*

*Once more, then, Uncle Edward sizes up the house; a good house now, a contented house, a bread-and-butter house not to be quarrelled with.*

*"You take your public as you find 'em, my Missie," he says, or rather, this he only seems to say. His words are: "Alice, get on with your bit."*

*So Alice smiles again, and smooths her frock and puts her heels together and turns out her toes, and gets on.*



LICE. [*As she faces them.*] I beg your pardon. Well, that was in seventeen hundred and something. And we skip the eighteen hundreds because they were so busy: too busy to play, except just riotously, and we skip to-day, too, because . . . well, really because what we showed you about to-day with bits of "you" put in it might seem rather rude. And we skip to-morrow, because to-morrow really is too serious to make our sort of jokes about. So we go right on to the day after. And you've noticed, haven't you, that we go westward all the time? So next the scene's in America, which you get to through New York. Things have been going from bad to worse with our four poor gods, but what has principally knocked them endways is machinery. Now America is full of machinery. And they can't understand it. For whatever a machine is supposed to do in the end, there's one thing it always seems sure to do in the beginning, if you're not very, very

careful. And that is to knock the spirit out of a man. Which is his magic. Clown and Pantaloon and Harlequin and Columbine are very simple folk, you know. They let themselves be just what it's most natural to be, and only try to give their friends in front . . . kind friends in front, they call them . . . just what will make them happiest quickest. So this is what they've come to be by this time, Clown and Columbine, Harlequin and Pantaloon. No names but those, no meaning, no real part at all in the rattle and clatter of machinery which is now called Life. They're out of it. They clung to the skirts of the theatre for a bit. But the theatre, aching to be "in it", flung them off. The intellectual drama had no use for them, no use at all. And so they found themselves (out of it indeed) busking on the pavement, doing tricks and tumbling and singing silly songs to the unresponsive profiles of long lines of ladies (high-nosed or stumpy-nosed ladies), waiting admittance to the matinées of some highly intellectual play. And with glasses on those noses they'd be reading while they waited the book of that same play: so even then our poor gods busked in vain. But worse, far worse. . . .

Along came the Man of the World again. He calls himself the Man of Business now. "Do the Public really want this sort of stuff?" he said. "Well, let 'em have it. But as a Business Proposition, if you please."

So he bought up all the theatres, and he said he'd make them pay. And his cousin, the Man in the Street, took shares. And they organised the Theatre. And they made it efficient. And they conducted it on sound commercial lines. And the magic vanished and people wondered where and why. Now what we're going to show you, you won't believe could ever happen at all. It does seem like the cheapest of cheap jokes. But really if we will think magic's to be bought and sold, and if we leave our gods to starve because there isn't any money in their laughter or their tears . . . well, it's more than the Theatre that may suffer. But the poor pampered Theatre is our business now, and here's our cheap, cheap joke about it. You aren't expected to laugh . . . in fact, perhaps you shouldn't. It's one of those jokes you smile at, crookedly you know, this joke of the Theatre as it well may be the day after to-morrow if some of us don't look out.

*[And with that we hear music. It's a rag-time tune, and something about it hurts us. After ten bars we find out what and why. It is the theme of the gods cheapened and degraded. Music is of all the arts the directest epitome of life. Not a noble thing in it that cannot, it would seem, with just a turn or two, be turned to baseness.]*

*Alice and Uncle Edward draw back the curtains, and there's another curtain to be seen. It is not beautiful to look at — but it's useful. It has six advertisements painted on it in "screaming" colour. "Eat and keep thin" says one. "Drink and keep sober" says the next, and Somebody's Patent Something is the way. "Indulge freely; we take the consequence", the motto runs beneath the two. "Patent pearls that will deceive an oyster" says the third. The fourth's a Face Cream, and the fifth's for Shattered Nerves. The sixth says, "Believe in our Patent God and you shall assuredly be saved." From one side comes the Man of the World — Man of Business — Business Manager. Silk hat, dress coat, white waistcoat, shiny*

*shirt, patent boots, and big cigar; he's very smart and prosperous indeed. From the other side come the four poor gods, out of work buskers of the streets, down at heel and weary. But still gods, and with a god-like snap of ill-temper to them for you to know them by.*

CLOWN. Morning.

MAN OF THE WORLD. Afternoon.

CLOWN. Is it? Now [*Says he to the others*], you leave it to me, and let's all keep our tempers. See here, Mr. Man, is this the old 99th Street Theayter?

MAN OF THE WORLD. This, sir, and you know it as well as I do, is nothing so out of date. It is Number 2613 of the five thousand Attraction Houses controlled by the Hustle Trust Circuit of Automatic Drama: President, Mr. Theodor B. Kedger. But it is located on 99th Street, New York City.

CLOWN. Are you the boss?

MAN OF THE WORLD. I am a deputy sub-inspector of the New York and New Jersey division of the circuit.

CLOWN. Can we have a job, me and my pals, here?



MAN OF THE WORLD. You cannot.

CLOWN. And why not?

MAN OF THE WORLD. Because you are superseded.

CLOWN. What's that?

PANTALON. I'll super if there's nothing better.

CLOWN. Where is the durn President?

MAN OF THE WORLD. I learn from the fashionable intelligence that he is at present cruising the Mediterranean on his electric yacht.

CLOWN. Where's the author of the piece?

MAN OF THE WORLD. There ain't no author of the piece. This present item is turned out by our Number Two Factory of Automatic Dramaturgy; Plunkville, Tennessee.

CLOWN. Where are the other actors . . . God help 'em?

MAN OF THE WORLD. There ain't no actors; we froze all them out way back. Where've you been that you've grown all these mossy ideas on you?

CLOWN. Never you mind. Tell us, what's come to the poor old 99th Street Theayter . . . and how.

MAN OF THE WORLD. Well, I guess I need only quote you from Volume One of the Life of Mr.

Theodor B. Kedger, our esteemed President . . . Nit! [*And as he says "Nit," if it were not for all the anti-expectoration notices hung round he would certainly spit.*] It is stacked ready to put on the market the day he passes in his checks. Hold on now. About the year 1918 Mr. Kedger, who had already financially made good over the manipulation of wood-pulp potatoes, synthetic bread, and real estate, turned his attention to the Anglo-American Theatre. For the Anglo-American Theatre did not pay. Here was Mr. Kedger's opportunity. Forming a small trust, he bought up the theatres, both of the Variety and of the Monotonous kind, bought up the dramatists with their copyrights present and future, bought up the actors —

PANTALOON. Didn't buy me.

MAN OF THE WORLD. Didn't count you.

CLOWN. Cost much?

MAN OF THE WORLD. [*He winks.*] The payment was partly made in shares. He then paid the Dramatists considerable sums not to go on writing, which was, of course, a clear profit. He paid the actors to stop acting, which was in some cases a needless expenditure of money. He also brought in the Cinema and Gramophone

interests, organising the whole affair upon a strictly business basis.

PANTALON. He left us out. We've had cruel hard times, but I'm glad he left us out.

MAN OF THE WORLD. Then followed some years of experiment in the scientific manufacture and blending of drama. As I speak, no less than twenty-three factories dot the grassy meads of America. The work is done by clerks employed at moderate salaries for eight hours a day. For the cerebation of whatever new ideas may be needed, several French literary men are kept in chains in the backyard, being fed exclusively on absinthe and caviare sandwiches during their periods of creative activity. No less than forty different brands of drama are turned out, each with its description stamped clearly on the can. While a complete equipment for anyone can be travelled by the operator in his valise, still leaving room for toothbrush and slumber-suit.

CLOWN. Do the public like the stuff?

MAN OF THE WORLD. They've got to like it. They get none else.

CLOWN. Can't you give us another chance? I'll lay we could make good.

MAN OF THE WORLD. Sorry, sonny, but I

don't see how you'd fit in. Watch this attraction I'm going to try over.

CLOWN. You still rehearse, do you?

MAN OF THE WORLD. Once. Would you like to watch? Then you'll see.

CLOWN. What's it called?

MAN OF THE WORLD. It's called "Love: a Disease", and it's Number seventy-six of the High Brow Ibsen series. It ain't got nothing to do with Ibsen really, but his is still a name that sells. He was a German professor of mathematics and highly respected in his day. I'll have you see a bit of one act.

COLUMBINE. What's the plot?

MAN OF THE WORLD. No plot. It's a home life story, a conversation. A man is telling a woman that he is just bored stiff with everything on earth.

PANTALON. Ah!

MAN OF THE WORLD. And she doesn't know what to say. That's the first act.

CLOWN. Gosh!

MAN OF THE WORLD. In the next he's asking her advice as to whether a really tired man ought to marry. And she doesn't know.

CLOWN. How long does that take?

MAN OF THE WORLD. Quite a while.

CLOWN. Which is the act we are going to see?

MAN OF THE WORLD. The third. It contains the action. About half-way through he moves across to her and says: "Don't cry, little girl, I can always shoot myself!" And then he finds out that she is stone deaf from birth, and hasn't really heard a word he said. So she goes forth into the world to learn the Oral system, while he awaits her return, when he will begin again. Are you ready? I'll ring up.

*[Quite wonderfully the big cigar shifts to one corner of his mouth, almost in line with his ear, and he whistles shrilly. The curtain of the "six ads." flies away, and there's the automatic drama in full swing. Three canvas walls, liberally stencilled in the worst Munich style. And in this space are two pink gramophones on two green pedestals. One is gilt-lettered "Arthur." The other silver-lettered "Grace." The trumpets incline to each other a little, for this is a love scene going on. On a white framed space in the back wall, stage directions are written moviely. This one spells out "Arthur is still speaking. He crosses*

*his legs and takes an asthma cigarette."*  
*Then the gilt-lettered phonograph croaks:—*

ARTHUR. After all, what is love but a disease of the imagination? Don't cry, little girl, I can always shoot myself!

GRACE. [*Who croaks an octave higher.*] I'm not crying. Tell me more.

[*Moviely the stage direction comes: "He leans forward."*

ARTHUR. But why should there be one law for women and another for men? One law for childhood and another for old age? Why skirts, why trousers? Why those monotonies of sensation and experience? Why this unreality, this hypocrisy, this cowardice, this exaltation of the super-sham? Why . . . ?

[*Moviely at the back is written: "She leans forward, too."*

MAN OF THE WORLD. Now the emotion thickens!

GRACE. Let us go back to the beginning.

PANTALOON. I can't hear none of this.

CLOWN. If you worked Pictures with it, it mightn't be so bad . . . for them as likes this sort of stuff.

MAN OF THE WORLD. We do work Pictures with the lighter and fruitier forms of drama. But here they would only obfuscate the cerebration. Wait till she cerebrates. And she cerebrates some!

GRACE. No child at her mother's knee was more innocent than I. How then did knowledge of good and evil come? I will tell you. I will tell you of the evil first . . .

PANTALOOM. Columbine, you go and wait outside.

GRACE. [*With a louder croak.*] Passion . . .!

CLOWN. Stop!

MAN OF THE WORLD. Don't interrupt.

CLOWN. She ain't got no right to it with a voice like that.

GRACE. Laughter . . .!

CLOWN. Never laughed in her life! Never had a life to laugh in!

MAN OF THE WORLD. Young man, if this were a performance, you would be dealt with by our æsthetic policewoman. Vulgar comments made in public upon works of art are now an indictable offence.

CLOWN. Works of what?

GRACE. . . . And the joy of life!

CLOWN. Stop, I say!

MAN OF THE WORLD. For the last time . . . don't interrupt.

CLOWN. I will interrupt. And I'll smash those durned machines, though the last Clown in the world is hung for it. For that's me . . . that's me! Oh, has it come to this, after all we've done for the theatre! Haven't we loved it, Grandfer, haven't we? My red-hot poker's in pawn, and I've worn out the sausages. But let's have a try to make him laugh. Take the starch out of him! Take the bank-note rustle out of him! Take the Theatre from him. Save it and save him, too! Come on, old 'un. Kiss your hand, Columbine. Harlequin, if you love me, if you love the drama, have one more try. Magic . . . Magic! Turn these clicking clocks there back into wholesome human bad actors again, and turn the Deputy Inspector of the New York Circuit of the Hustle Bustle Trust of Automatic . . .

*[Columbine trips across the stage. Pantaloon chuckles. Clown tumbles head over heels and sends the Man of the World flying. Harlequin leaps in the air and smites with his wand the two pink gramophones on the two green stands. They vanish!]*



*Down through a trap goes the Man of the World. Red Fire! And Alice, as she tugs the curtains to, calls in her most stentorian tones . . .*

ALICE. Grand transformation scene! I always draw the curtains rather quick because it never works quite right.

*[She waits a little, and then, very simply, says]*  
The gods go back . . .

*[And stops and swallows. Poor dear, her throat is dry.]*

UNCLE EDWARD. You want your glass of milk.

ALICE. They don't ever really go. For what would become of us without them? But it rounds off the play. They just go back as flowers die to come again forever. For the seed of the gods is sown in the hearts of men. The seeds of Love and of the Magic of High Adventure and of Laughter and of Foolishness, too. Well, when they reach the Styx there still sits that philosopher, who wasn't a philosopher at all because he sought no wisdom but his own. Because of that, you see, he has found none. There he sits, deaf and blind, while Olympus flashes and thunders behind him. There he sits, chattering that there are no gods.



*HE curtains are drawn back on the last scene. The Styx again, flowing black beneath its black mountains. There sits the Philosopher, patiently. He is dressed now as a Member of Parliament, or worse. He has a fountain pen and a notebook. And the gods arrive. Mercury, Charon, Momus, and Psyche.*

PHILOSOPHER. Who are you?

MERCURY. We are the gods returning.

PHILOSOPHER. [*Very definitely indeed.*] There are no gods. Though from time to time it has been necessary to invent them.

PANTALON. Why, it's my friend, the philosopher!

PHILOSOPHER. Pardon me. Nothing so unpractical. I am a Political Economist. I write Blue Books. I make laws.

MERCURY. Can you row us over?

PHILOSOPHER. What a question! I have established several rowing academies. I know how rowing is done. But, as a matter of fact,

I cannot row. Still it's of little consequence, for the boat was given to a museum some time ago. Besides, the latest theories tell us that there is no other side.

CLOWN. Ain't there? Well, I'm going to swim and see.

PHILOSOPHER. Pardon me, bathing is not allowed in the Styx.

CLOWN. Ain't it?

*[Off tumbles Momus, and you hear him splash in the river. The Political Economist has risen indignantly. Under the bench, dusty and neglected, Psyche spies something. She runs to see. With a little cry she picks them up, and shakes and smooths them. They are the Talaria. (Do you know what Talaria are? Look up Mercurius in Lemprière's Classical Dictionary.)*

MERCURY. Wings! My wings!

PHILOSOPHER. Yes, they are wings. Left here by two children, and I hadn't the heart to destroy them. But I hid them away; they are dangerous. The very sight of wings makes men and women feel above themselves.

MERCURY. Bind them on.

*[And Psyche kneels to bind them on his feet.*

Sir, I return you your rags and your mask. They are at least more picturesque than your present attire. Listen, the great gods are waking! Monday morning in Olympus. Charon, stay with this fellow. He means well by the world; but teach him to rebuild the boat. For when his work is done he'll be glad to escape and to rest as you row him across the river. Psyche, we're late. Let us fly.

*[For the last time the blue curtains close.]*

UNCLE EDWARD. Now, your last bit . . . the bit the journalist wrote in your album.

ALICE. Oh, yes, if you please, you're to be sure and remember that:—

In the noise and haste and bustle  
Fairies on the lamplit pavements;  
Gods in gorse and heath and heather;  
Fauns behind the hedges playing;  
Pan about in any weather.

Children hear them, see them, know them;  
See the things the fairies show them,  
Harlequin in magic poses;  
Columbine among the roses;  
Pantaloon in slippered ease is  
Laughing at Clown's ancient wheezes  
In the Summer, in the Spring,

In the sunshine, in the rain,  
Summon them and hear them cry —

“Here we are again.”

That’s all, isn’t it, Uncle?

UNCLE EDWARD. Yes, that’s all.

ALICE. Good night.

*[And so, the Harlequinade being over, we go home. A little later Alice and Uncle Edward and the actors, all rather tired and ready for supper, start home, too.]*





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